

**Park Avenue Faith Community
Collaborative Meeting
July 24, 2008**

Attending:

1. Chris Andersen, *First Presbyterian Church, Church & Community Concerns Committee*
2. Brenda Banks, *Angels on Wheels*
3. Jodi Cooper, *Mosaic Community Development*
4. Christian Gray, *Mosaic Community Development*
5. Brittany Hanson, *Mosaic Community Development*
6. Kevin Marik, *Metropolitan Community Church member & deacon*
7. Pastor Kip Mickelson, *First Baptist Church*
8. Carla Petersen, *Metropolitan Community Church member & deacon*
9. Pastor Judith Rainforth, *First Lutheran Church*
10. Wanda Selzer, *First Lutheran Church member*
11. Reverend Jonathan Sloan, *First Presbyterian Church*
12. Stephen Stout, *Good Neighbor Ministries*
13. Eric VanEpps, *Mosaic Community Development*

Overview

Members of the faith community in the Park Avenue area met on July 24, 2008. The meeting continued the format of recent meetings, with the first hour and fifteen minutes devoted to task force work and the final forty-five minutes oriented toward updates and reports from the task forces, as well as a short discussion about building community as a faith leader collaboration.

The meeting was held at Metropolitan Community Church from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. The meeting was facilitated and notes were taken for reporting back to participants. Thirteen people participated in the meeting and planning session, with Reverend Jonathan Sloan joining the collaboration meeting for the first time.

Copies of the previous meeting's summary (June 26, 2008) were available, as were meeting agendas. In addition, there were copies of a recent Omaha World-Herald article that highlighted First Baptist Church's 150th anniversary and mentioned the upcoming community meals program. Food was graciously provided by Kevin Marik and Metropolitan Community Church; after a few minutes of settling, the participants broke off into task forces. Participants worked in task forces for 70-75 minutes.

Task force participants were as follows:

Community Events: Brenda Banks
Brittany Hanson
Carla Petersen
Pr. Judith Rainforth
Wanda Selzer

Community Meals: Chris Andersen
Jodi Cooper

Christian Gray
Kevin Marik
Pr. Kip Mickelson
Rev. Jonathan Sloan
Stephen Stout
Eric VanEpps

As participants reconvened in the larger group during the second hour, there was a round of introductions and reports from the two task forces.

Task Force Reports & Feedback

Community Meals Task Force

The task force discussed the need to recruit two types of volunteer teams: one that will come from a specific church to serve a meal once every twelve or so weeks, and one that consists of members from various churches that will consistently attend the meals. The group of volunteers that attend the meals for the purpose of developing relationships will act as the more consistent presence and should be composed of about two people from each church each week. There can be a larger pool of possible volunteers, but at least twenty volunteers are needed all together for the relational group each week.

Training for the volunteers was discussed, with the decision that training would have to include both a clear description of the logistics necessary to provide a meal— how the food must be cooked, how to take care of the facilities, what chores must be completed each time, etc. — as well as provide an understanding of the importance of relationship-building and how to best engage in meaningful conversations. Some basic ground rules need to be established for the meals program, and the volunteers will have to enforce them. As such, it will be important to implement a welcome statement each week that includes the rules in a positive manner and that emphasizes that this is more than a meal, but a chance to develop relationships. The first training session is scheduled for Saturday, September 6, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at First Baptist Church.

The task force also discussed the importance of recruiting committed volunteers for two specific roles. One person will need to coordinate the program and volunteers on a weekly basis, managing the schedules and contacting volunteers each week to ensure that enough people will be present to serve the meal and be in community. Another person will need to be present each week and demonstrate a real commitment to the community meals program. This person will be the one to set-up and tear down each week, acting as the authority figure that people—both volunteers and neighbors—can come to with questions or concerns.

The volunteer teams serving the meal for the first six weeks currently are:

Sept. 13 - First Baptist Church
Sept. 20 - Good Neighbor Ministries
Sept. 27 - First Lutheran Church
Oct. 4 - TBA
Oct. 11 - TBA
Oct. 18 - Metropolitan Community Church

The task force decided that the churches for the first six weeks should bring more than ten people to help cover any gaps that may not have been foreseen. Members of the task force will share the information about the community meals program with their congregations and with leaders of other local churches, using the brochure developed by the collaboration. Contact will be made with local media sources to promote the program, and a flyer will be created that can be given to neighbors to invite them to the meals.

The back-up location for the community meals program (if First Baptist has a conflict of some sort) is St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church.

Community Events Task Force

The task force began by confirming the details of the block party for the entire group. The Block Party will be this Sunday, August 3 from 2:00 to 6:00 at Hanscom Park (3201 Woolworth Ave.). There will be free food—hot dogs, snack food, and drinks—as well as social service vendors and churches, each with a table for information and a possible activity. There are currently about twenty vendors that will participate. On fields at the park, soccer and possibly kickball will be provided as activities.

The task force then discussed what is still needed. Volunteers still need to be recruited to prepare and distribute the food, as well as to manage the booths. Pastor Kip stated that First Baptist Church will provide tables and chairs, and the church will transport them to Hanscom Park on the morning of August 3rd. Other tables are still needed, and Carla Petersen will check with others at Metropolitan Community Church to see if any of those are available. Stephen Stout volunteered three large garbage cans and up to thirty garbage bags for the event.

For music, the task force decided to use a variety of cultural music CDs that will create a festive mood. The task force is also writing a survey that will be distributed and collected at the block party to get an idea of what needs are present in the community. The survey will be written in both English and Spanish, and those who complete a survey will be entered into a drawing for gift items. Donations are still being accepted for additional gift items.

Food donations are still being accepted, and the task force currently has about \$100 in grocery store gift cards and \$100 in cash from vendor fees (\$200 all together) with which to buy food for the event. Pastor Kip and Reverend Jonathan will go to Costco to purchase some hot dogs and buns for the event.

Flyers for the neighborhood and for local churches will be distributed soon, but the task force also reminded members of the collaboration to invite friends and congregation members to come to the block party and be in community with those from the neighborhood.

Building Collaboration Community

Brittany Hanson revisited the desire expressed by many to develop a more intentional community among the collaboration. Time was running short, and Brittany simply asked that leaders begin thinking about how the collaboration might structure itself to foster greater trust and community as well as long-term structure, including what protocols should be established for decision making, etc. In terms of community building, one initial idea was an informal pitch-in dinner for collaboration members hosted by collaboration members. Additional ideas can be submitted to

Brittany Hanson (brittany@mosaiccd.org); the collaboration will be approaching more in-depth conversations regarding these ideas in the coming months.

Wrap-Up

Time was running short, but specific action points for the task forces had already been divided up during the first hour.

The next meeting is on Thursday, August 28, 2008 (11:00 am – 1:00 pm). If interested in hosting a meeting at your location, please contact Brittany Hanson (brittany@mosaiccd.org) for scheduling.